

Health Education: A Positive Perspective

by Peeka Trenkle

“The States parties to this Constitution declare, in conformity with the Charter of United Nations, that the following principles are basic to the happiness, harmonious relations and security of all peoples: Health is a state of complete physical, mental and social well-being and not merely the absence of disease or infirmity. The highest attainable standard of health is one of the fundamental rights of every human being without distinction of race, religion, political belief, economic or social condition.”

- Preamble, Constitution of the World Health Organization, 1948

Much of what is called health care or health education in our culture is focused on disease rather than health. In American schools, children are taught how to avoid disease, prevent accidents, administer first aid, and recognize the effects of stress and poor diet. All of these are beneficial things to understand but we do not seem to teach how to be healthy and the basic nature of health. We accept the idea that health is the absence of symptoms and pathology. But true health is more than the absence of symptoms, it is the presence of a certain something else that is difficult to describe.

On a physical level, health might mean freedom from pain, an ability to adapt to the environment, and a degree of energy that allows the body to be an efficient tool.

On an emotional level this means being able to feel and express emotions, to give and receive love, and a certain level of stability – free from dramatic mood swings or extreme states of mania or depression.

Mental health would include the ability to learn, discriminate and understand, with clarity and ability to concentrate.

And having a conscience, a sense of right and wrong, a sense of purpose, and a feeling of connection would all be indicative of spiritual health.

When we see health through a lens of disease, the disease becomes the focus and all of our sophisticated technologies, diagnostic tools, and drugs are directed towards the disease process, as if it is independent of the person experiencing it. Removal of symptoms does not always restore vitality. There are also currently many diseases for which there are no treatments and diseases are rarely fully cured in conventional treatment. Terms that are frequently used in conventional medicine include ‘fighting’, ‘guarding against’, ‘eradicating’, ‘killing’, and other terms that connote a kind of antagonism, almost militaristic in tone. There is a lot of fear associated with this way of thinking.

When we view health as the primary condition, in which disease is an imbalance, we take the whole person into account. In homeopathic healing, the person and not the disease is the focus. The imbalanced state often corrects itself and health is restored as a result of restoring balance in the person. Terms that are used in this paradigm include ‘restoring’, ‘recuperating’, ‘revitalizing’, ‘healing’, ‘recovering’ and the focus is on creating a state of wholeness and vital health. This perspective can exist in both models of care, of course. All of our medical technologies can be used for healing, and often are.

Good health is a blessing and should be celebrated and cultivated. Issues regarding health should not only get our attention when we are suffering but in our daily lives as well.

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